

## The Ash Grove

In an ash grove among the mountains once, I was glad  
exceedingly, walking under the trees, noting the standing I had  
Naught that I knew to be glad of. Bare & decayed,  
their few leaves shivering in silence, the trees were not sad

Though half of them stood dead & the living made  
little more than the dead ones made of shade.  
If it led to a house the house was long since gone,  
but the ash grove welcomed me & my feet delayed

from where I saw the first of the stony roots clasp the stone  
and I forgot myself & the past & future, on  
to where the last of the shadows fell & the blaze  
of the sun returned, & outside I walked alone.

Before & after nothing was worth my gaze  
or my thought. For emptiness it was a day of it up,  
except that moment under the ash trees tall  
which ~~that~~ <sup>then</sup> to have understood would have been to erase.

Score a hundred paces in slow paces was the interval —  
Paces each sweeter than sweetest miles — but nothing at all,  
Not even the spirits of memory & foreseeing,  
Could climb in upon me over the wall

That I passed through at either end without noticing:  
And how an ash grove far from these hills can bring  
The same tranquillity in which I wander a ghost  
With a ghostly gladness, as if I heard a girl sing

The song of the Ash Grove soft as I love it most,  
And then in a crowd or in distance it were lost,  
But the moment gave it an immortality  
As they did those trees, without search, or desert, or cost.